

With Real Estate, Auto  
And Classified Advertising

# Escapes

The New York Times

FRIDAY



# kiing U.S.A.: Resorts on the

E S

## Rough Edges sted Butte

Butte Mountain Resort in west-  
was reeling. Never mind that the  
place of extreme skiing in North  
skiers here enjoy perhaps the best  
e groovy former mining town at its  
do's last great ski town." The resort  
ent in skier attendance over the last  
were so behind on the land's lease  
ates Forest Service had threatened

months make. In March, Tim and  
ily, owners of the Okemo Mountain  
erators of Mount Sunapee in New  
rt for close to \$50 million. In the off-  
ore than \$6 million on a new chairlift  
runs as well as less sexy catch-up  
s winter to the Butte, as it is called,  
like additional snow-making cover-  
achines, fresh uniforms on the ski  
anking on the rusting lift houses.

ning soon, however. Work will begin  
million town center with nearly 1,000  
of the lifts, which now consists of little  
parking lots and a clutch of beige  
The Muellers also want to expand  
jacent Snodgrass Mountain, which  
n by a third. They are also planning  
e sites and condos around the resort

s' purchase and their vision, other  
few hundred yards from the lifts, a  
place for the initial 29 units in the

ued on Page 3



Carmel Zucker for The New York Times

Butte can avoid Aspen-like glitz.



Chad Case for The New York Times

IDAHO Day One at Tamarack, the country's newest ski mountain.

H A V E N S

## Tamarack, a Mountain For the 21st Century

By TIM NEVILLE

ON the night before the opening of the country's newest destination ski resort, the scene was far from clichéd John Denver tranquillity. Instead of hearing sleigh bells or following the spicy scent of mulled wine, the few people milling about Tamarack Resort near McCall had to be particularly careful not to be run over by forklifts.

As trucks and heavy earth-moving equipment rattled along the newly constructed streets and walkways, crews installed streetlamps, laid carpet and otherwise readied the resort for V.I.P.'s, politicians, investors and curious powder hounds itching to make arguably the freshest tracks in North American skiing this season.

When Tamarack opened the next day, on Dec. 15, about 750 people showed up to ski 18 of the 25 runs cut so far, eat hamburgers and dance to the folky twang of a string band in a large canvas tent that, for the moment, serves as the resort's base lodge. But if the crowd and setting were modest, all through this valley of cattle ranchers about 110 miles north of Boise one could hear the climatic cymbal crash in what has been a decades-long crescendo building to this opening. Tamarack, on 7,700-foot West Mountain, is the first four-season ski resort in the United States — like Big Sky or Vail — to be built from the ground up since Beaver Creek in Colorado and Deer Valley in Utah opened within days of each other in December 1981.

When the work is done in 10 to 15 years, Tamarack will be a \$1.5 billion destination resort with 62 runs, 7 chairlifts, at least

Continued on Page 2

A D

## All For Mt.

SNOWFLAKES th  
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Mount Washington Cog  
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The slope is sedate  
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Colby of Boston to turn  
come so he could tell pe  
ton," Ms. Colby said.

The cog train is run  
families who also share  
tain Resort and four lo  
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### WEEKENDER

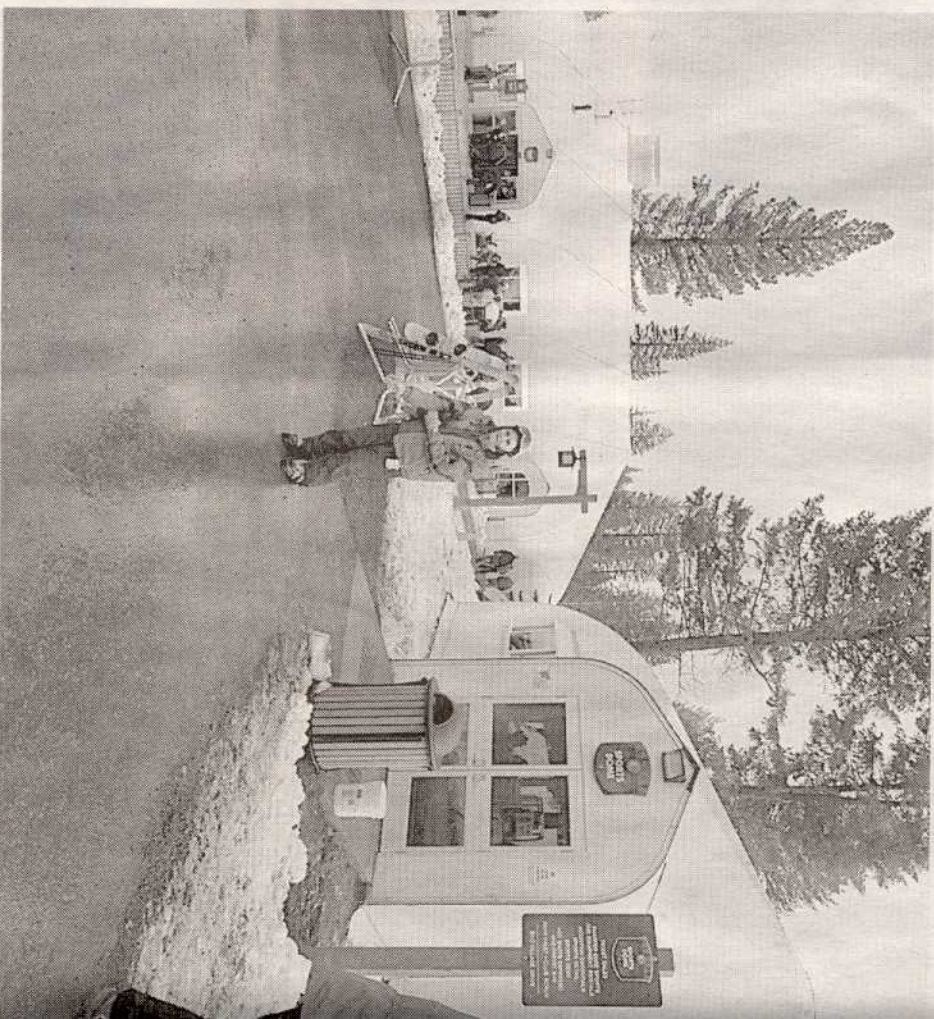
The convenient  
slopes of Vernon, N.J.  
Page 5.



NEW HAMPSHIRE The cog

## H A V E N S

## Tamarack, a Mountain for the 21st Century



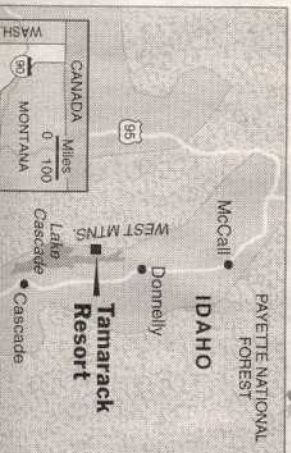
**NEW TRAILS** Skiers on the slopes Dec. 15 when Tamarack opened for its first season. Temporary canvas buildings, right, house skier services and restaurants at the base, where 34 stone and wood build-

*Continued From First Escapes Page*

one 18-hole golf course, a medical clinic, a fire department, an amphitheater and some 14 stone and wood buildings in a base village area that will merit its own ZIP code. Property owners will have access to exclusive resort benefits: unlimited skiing, unlimited golf, early-bird "fresh-tracks" chairlift services on powder days, the best tables in the best restaurants and catering services.

interests in plastics, petroleum and helicopters, and he paid off the Valbois debt after the bankruptcy and renamed the project WestRock. Mr. Boespflug, who has at least \$28 million invested in the project, came aboard in 2000. Executives once again changed the name, to Tamarack, after a type of pine tree found in the area's forests.

Under Mr. Boespflug, a Stanford computer science graduate and a native of southern France with experience developing resorts in the Alps, engineers scaled back the origi-



tain vista, more skiers and tickets in hand to test. Though Tamarack has a vertical feet of terrain at of beginner, intermediate the runs do not make avir those at, say, Jackson Ho. Tamarack plans to limit than 1,500 people on the r — or about 150,000 a se guests have much of the selves. By comparison a

one 18-hole golf course, a medical clinic, a fire department, an amphitheater and some 34 stone and wood buildings in a base village area that will merit its own ZIP code. Property owners will have access to exclusive resort benefits: unlimited skiing, unlimited golf, early-bird "fresh-tracks" chairlift services on powder days, the best tables in the best restaurants and catering services.

Plans for similar resorts — Catamount in Colorado and Early Winters in Washington, to name two — have popped up all across the West for decades. (One is currently under way outside Missoula, Mont.) But each one ran out of money or could not secure the necessary permits and has never opened. Tamarack, however, has made it through the financial-bureaucratic mogul field largely thanks to astute legal alliances forged by a French former ski instructor named Jean-Pierre Boespflug, 50. And unlike 92 percent of the 490 ski areas in the country, which sit on federally controlled Forest Service land, Tamarack's runs belong to the state of Idaho.

"When Tamarack came to us with a proposal, I thought, 'How can we make this work?'" said Dirk Kempthorne, the Republican governor of Idaho, wearing Harley-Davidson motorcycle boots and standing in the snow near the resort's summit on opening day. "We now have another world-class resort, not just a ski area, that adds to the pulse of Idaho. It's a long story, but it has a happy ending."

**T**AMARACK itself is built on the bones of a resort that struggled for about 15 years to open on nearly the same swath of land. (It is near the small town of Donnelly and should not be confused with the town of Tamarack, 30 miles to the northwest.) Throughout the 1980's, another group of investors had envisioned building a massive resort on land owned by Donald K. Weilmunster, a cattle farmer and a former Boise County commissioner. That company, called Valbois, wrestled for years to secure permits to open runs on land within Boise National Forest. The process, which included engineering fees and environmental impact studies, dragged on for years, and by 1998, Valbois was bankrupt with \$6 million in debts and not a ski run cut.

"Ski areas like this are labor intensive, demand high capital up front, are dependent on mother nature and on top of all that, your landlord is typically the government," said Jim Spent, Tamarack's vice president for operations. "Who wants to invest in that?"

A Mexican businessman named Alfredo Miguel Afif did. He is an investor with

interests in plastics, petroleum and helicopters, and he paid off the Valbois debt after the bankruptcy and renamed the project WestRock. Mr. Boespflug, who has at least \$28 million invested in the project, came aboard in 2000. Executives once again changed the name, to Tamarack, after a type of pine tree found in the area's forests.

Under Mr. Boespflug, a Stanford computer science graduate and a native of southern France with experience developing resorts in the Alps, engineers scaled back the original Valbois plan from 3,500 residential units to 2,043 units.

More importantly, Mr. Boespflug, who once taught skiing at Squaw Valley on weekends, shifted the proposed ski runs slightly north to an adjacent and smaller swath of land managed by the state of Idaho, rather than by the federal government. The resort's vacation homes and base areas are on land that Tamarack bought from Mr. Weilmunster, nearly the same area once offered to Valbois.

Unlike the federal government, Idaho ac-

**'Rome wasn't built in a day,' a developer said. Tamarack is 'only slightly smaller.'**

tively seeks ways to use lands that were set aside long ago to help pay for schools. The Idaho State Land Board, which Governor Kempthorne heads, awarded Tamarack a 10-year lease in 2002. In spring 2003, the Idaho Legislature voted unanimously to extend it to 49 years at \$250,000 a year or a percentage of gross receipts.

Kent Sharp, a principal in the Frisco, Colo.-based mountain-development firm SE Group, said that Tamarack's move to state land had immediately and greatly improved its chances of success. "Getting a permit for a ski area on federal land has become enormously more difficult since the 60's," he said. "Laws have become more stringent about clean water, endangered species. Environmental impact statements can be 1,000 pages long." Mr. Sharp, whose firm did consulting work for Tamarack, added: "Someone said, 'Can we do this on state land without involving the National Forest?' The answer was 'Yes.'"

Not everyone thinks that maneuvering was for the better. Ted Zukoski, a Denver-based lawyer with Earthjustice, a public-land advocacy group, said that ski resorts



like Tamarack are more about selling high-end homes than promoting outdoor adventure. Valley County locals also complain of taxes propelled by skyrocketing property values — up 17 percent, the highest increase in the state, since 2003 — and a general loss of rural quiet to the noise of trucks and even helicopters.

But many in McCall and Donnelly, population 138, the resort's closest neighbor, view Tamarack as an economic lifeboat in an area staggering from a collapsed timber trade. Donnelly had one cafe six months ago. Now there are three with plans for two more.

Rory Veal, Tamarack's vice president of real estate sales, said Tamarack took in upward of \$77 million from the sale of 171 properties during just four days of sales in 2004. More than 275 people have already put down a \$10,000 refundable deposit to queue up for their pick at another 104 properties to be offered on Jan. 22. During the next year, the resort has plans for another 120 homes — chalets, cottages, town houses and condominium apartments that it will build, as well as houses built by people who buy the resort's "estate lots." Prices start at \$300,000 for a 525-square-foot Tamarack-built studio condominium; people who build their own homes are expected to spend \$6 million or more for a 12,000-square-foot custom-built house. These projects account for about a fifth of the land planned for residential development.

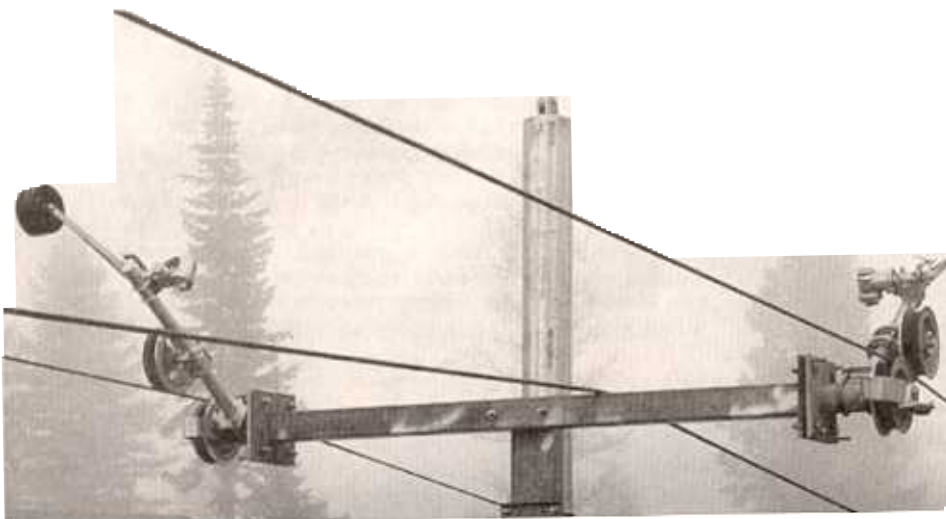
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## How Do You Wan

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Homeowners are expected to pay \$5 per \$1,000 in property valuation a year for things like street maintenance, utilities for common buildings, etc. These dues would amount to \$375 a month on a \$900,000 chalet.

Condos are offered fully furnished. The resort's sales team offers "furniture packages" for \$35,000 to \$55,000 as well as an "electronics package" — including DVD players, televisions and a security monitoring system to alert workers of fires or frozen pipes — for another \$3,200. Buyers planning to offer their home for rent through Tamarack's property man-





The New York Times



**MONEY MAN** Jean-Pierre Boespflug has at least \$28 million invested in Tamarack.

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for the chance to be on the sharp end of founding a resort. That "pioneering spirit" is what Ron and Jeri Walz said had drawn them to Tamarack. One day last week the couple, who sold their home in San Diego to become Tamarack's first permanent residents, invited visitors into their 1,818-square-foot Douglas fir chalet. The interior has granite countertops, wood floors, 20-foot-high exposed-beam ceilings and a \$27,000 "furniture package" that includes, among other things, an overstuffed couch, beds and a painting of a field and trees.

The chalet is a temporary shelter until construction is complete on the Walzes' 5,000-square-foot \$2 million custom home in the Pinnacle Place neighborhood.

The couple expressed no dismay at the virtually nonstop construction and a village base area made almost entirely of temporary Sprung tents — massive canvas-wall structures called domes, that house restaurants, bars and ski services until a permanent village is built in the next few years. "We really liked the quality of the vision they have for Tamarack," said Mr. Walz, who has four children and four corgis. "It's only going to get better."

On opening day, after the first chair ferried Tamarack's dignitaries to a mid-moun-

tain vista, more skiers arrived with \$55 lift tickets in hand to test the new slopes. Though Tamarack has a leg-burning 2,828 vertical feet of terrain and a generous mix of beginner, intermediate and expert slopes, the runs do not make avid skiers drool like those at, say, Jackson Hole in Wyoming.

Tamarack plans to limit skiers to no more than 1,500 people on the mountain each day — or about 150,000 a season — to ensure guests have much of the mountain to themselves. By comparison, about 367,000 skiers visited Idaho's classic resort, Sun Valley, last year. To keep from having to turn people away, Mr. Spent said that Tamarack would have advance ticket sales, but he said it could be years before numbers would really be an issue.

"Rome wasn't built in a day," Mr. Boespflug said. "We have a project here that's only slightly smaller."

**M**R. BOESPFLUG said that, for the moment, he was more concerned with creating a lively atmosphere for current visitors than peppering the land with buildings. "I want to woo people with service, not concrete," he said. By service he primarily meant amenities offered to property owners who pay a one-time fee of \$35,000 to be initiated into a members club. Once in, they pay another \$425 a month for access to a concierge, season ski passes for the entire family, unlimited golf, priority seating in lounges and restaurants and discounted boat rentals for touring on Lake Cascade, among other perks.

While prices on Tamarack's three real estate offerings jumped 30 percent between the first and second offerings and another 30 percent between the second and the Jan. 22 release to come — all in a year — the fact remains that the bulk of Mr. Boespflug's vision remains hidden behind trees yet to be felled, on land yet to be sold and in buildings yet to be built.

But it is Mr. Boespflug's vision that James Shanahan, a 64-year-old Texan who bought a \$800,000 chalet, hopes becomes a reality, if not just for the investment. "Everybody has their wish list and mine is to have a place in the mountains," Mr. Shanahan said, surrounded by his children eating lunch on opening day. "When I ask the kids to come to my place for Christmas, now I know they're going to do it."

IF YOU'RE LOOKING

## How Do You Want Your Idaho, Condo or Chalet?

**T**AMARACK RESORT sells four types of housing: condominiums with up to three bedrooms, duplex-style town houses, two-story cottages and chalets with wraparound decks. It also sells "estate lots" upon which buyers can build a custom home.

Homeowners are expected to pay \$5 per \$1,000 in property valuation a year for things like street maintenance, utilities for common buildings, etc. These dues would amount to \$375 a month on a \$900,000 chalet.

Condos are offered fully furnished. The resort's sales team offers "furniture packages" for \$35,000 to \$55,000 as well as an "electronics package" — including DVD players, televisions and a security monitoring system to alert workers of fires or frozen pipes — for another \$3,200. Buyers planning to offer their home for rent through Tamarack's property man-



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Here are some of the properties currently offered at Tamarack:

- The six-story Members Lodge, under construction, will have 41 condominium units (with one to three bedrooms), of which 27 units are for sale. Properties range from a 525-square-foot studio to a 2,100-square-foot penthouse with three bedrooms. All come fully furnished, feature knotty-alder woodwork, granite countertops and views of Lake Cascade or the slopes. Downstairs in the lodge will be restaurants, ski lockers and the golf pro shop. Prices range from \$299,000 to \$1.3 million.

- Town houses on Golden Bar Court are



Chad Case for The New York Times

**UNDER CONSTRUCTION** Tamarack plans to offer several types of housing.

slopeside duplexes with one to three bedrooms and two to three bathrooms, and range from 955 square feet to 1,593 square feet. These have granite countertops, wood-burning fireplaces and hardwood floors. Prices range from \$399,000 to \$750,000. A private hot tub is another \$12,000.

- Two-story chalets with 20-foot exposed-beam ceilings, wraparound decks, granite countertops, wood floors and outdoor stone fireplaces are \$899,000 to \$1.1 million. They range from 1,818 to 2,800 square feet and come with three to four

bedrooms and three to four baths.

- "Estate lots" are available to buyers who want to build a custom home; the lots are a half acre to one and a half acres. Houses must be more than 2,800 square feet and no larger than 12,000 square feet. (Resort officials consider anything larger an "environmental waste.") Builders must obtain a county construction permit and approval from a design review board at the resort, which wants only "mountain-style architecture," meaning no Mediterranean villas. Lots are \$480,000 to \$880,000.

TIM NEVILLE



Seats right beside a new chairlift at Tamarack.